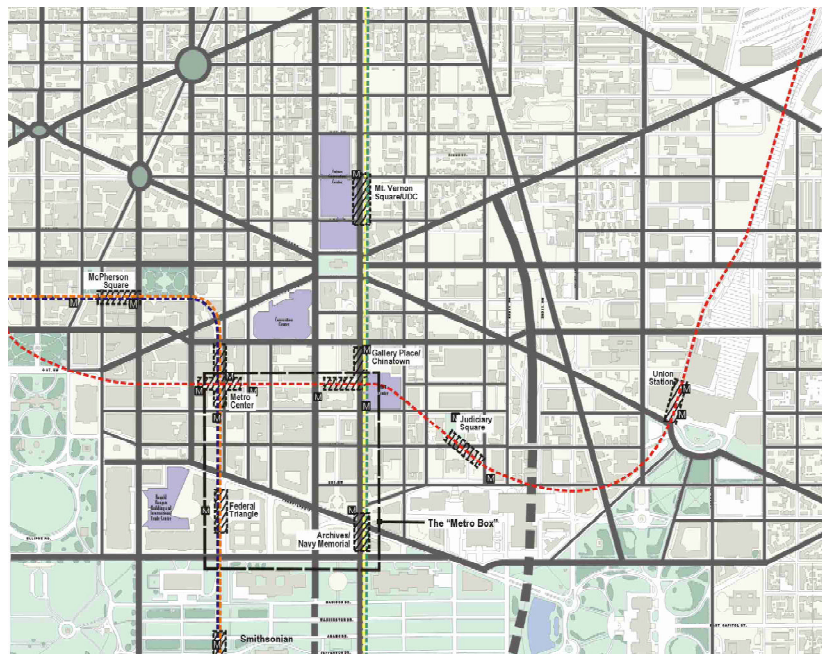


Transportation: Strengthen Downtown Circulation

Downtown is the focus of the metropolitan region's transportation system. Downtown has a strong network of local and arterial roadways that can accommodate a high volume of automobile and pedestrian traffic. Union Station, to the east of Downtown, serves as a hub for commuter rail, inter-state rail, and inter-city bus service. Downtown is also the center of the Metrorail system with nine stations. Together, the rail transit and bus system transport more than 75,000 riders each day, while more than 80,000 cars arrive downtown during the peak morning rush hour. While existing downtown transportation resources are strong, the system faces real challenges in several areas.



Downtown is well-served by roadways, Metro, and other forms of transportation.

Transportation Design / Internal Circulation

- Automobile and pedestrian linkages between the National Mall and Downtown are weak;
- Recent street closures hamper vehicular movement throughout the Downtown area and constrict east-west connections across the city;
- The Metrorail system is designed for commuters traveling to the city and is less conducive for short trips within Downtown;

- The price structure and hours of operation under the current system of on street and off-street private parking fail to meet the needs of residents, visitors and shoppers;

Transportation Capacity

- The major Metrorail transfer stations at Metro Center and Gallery Place/Chinatown are reaching 100 percent of their design capacity;
- Inefficient use of curb space for security barriers and travel lanes minimize opportunities to develop additional preferred short-term parking, loading, bus, and taxi stand usage.

Information

- The transportation system is complex and confusing. Washington's 22 million visitors frequently find it difficult to drive, park, and find their destinations;
- Lack of information about routes and services hinders use of the bus system;

Over the next 20 years, the shortfall for basic maintenance of streets and bridges is expected to reach \$ 1 billion in the District of Columbia. In order for downtown to continue to serve as the center of the regional economy, new sources of funding must be found to improve the transportation infrastructure.

Key Action: Establish inter-agency partnership for development and funding of a downtown circulator

Strategy One: Strengthen Connections Within Downtown and to the Rest of the City

Reopening streets that have been closed to traffic is an essential step to improve the transportation network within Downtown and to link downtown to the rest of the city. Highways and superblocks that interrupt land use patterns tear urban fabric, impede pedestrian and vehicular traffic, distort the historic street plan, and create areas of deterioration and blight. Eliminating barriers and restoring the street grid will increase vehicular accessibility, improve the pedestrian environment and restore the connections between Downtown and surrounding areas.

East-West Connections: Especially important is the extension of F Street across I-395 to the east, to connect the Downtown office core with the emerging employment center near Union Station. Linkages to the east can also be strengthened through improvements to the intersection of H Street and Massachusetts Avenue, with attractive streetscape treatments and improved signage. Redevelopment of the old convention center site will allow I Street and 10th Street to be reopened, thereby reducing traffic on H Street. Downtown and commercial areas to the west should be connected primarily along K Street.

Reopen Pennsylvania Avenue: This Action Agenda strongly encourages the reopening of Pennsylvania Avenue at the end of the year 2000, as an essential step to strengthen east-west connections across the city.

North-South Connections: Improvements should also be made to help connect Downtown to the rest of the city. To draw visitors into the downtown from the National Mall, pedestrian linkages need to be improved. Currently, 7th, 8th and 9th Streets are the main north-south pedestrian connectors that link Downtown and the National Mall. Other connections that need to be enhanced include 13th Street at the Ronald Reagan Building, 10th Street to connect the old Convention Center site, and the park

corridor between 4th and 5th Streets to further link Judiciary Square and the National Mall. In addition, vehicular routes to and from Downtown along 7th, 9th, 12th and 14th Streets should be improved.

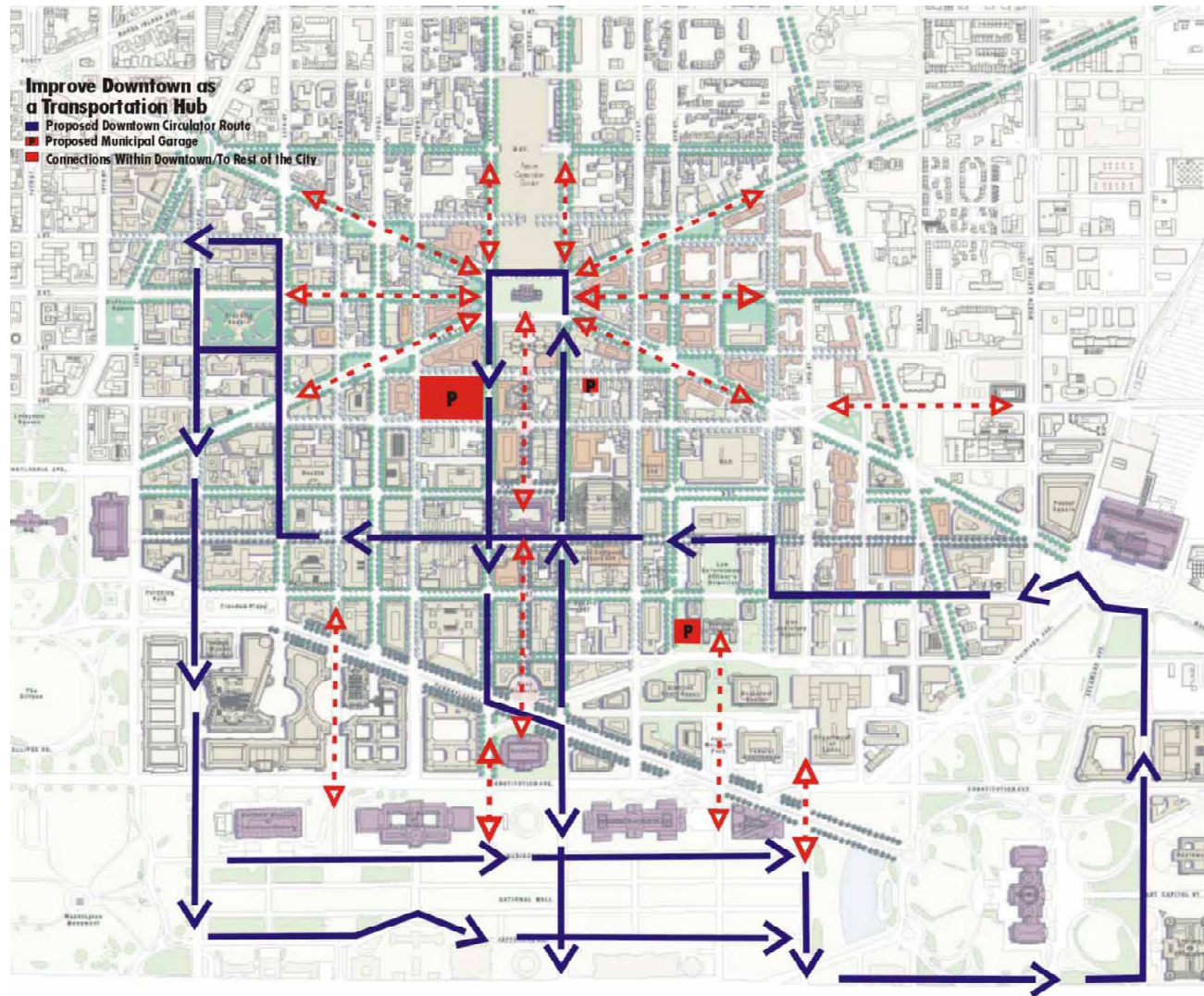
Uniform signs and attractive landscaping, lighting, signage and information kiosks can help with these connections with Downtown and to the rest of the city. Wayfinding systems and kiosks can provide information on travel routes, parking locations, and transit operations, as well as sightseeing information for tourists. Crucial Downtown sites for information kiosks installation include Union Station, Pennsylvania Avenue at 8th Street, H Street at 7th Street, and I Street at 13th Street. In addition, signage and streetscape improvements north of Mount Vernon Square near the new convention center would facilitate visitors' access to and from the Shaw community and Howard University.

Pedestrian and Vehicular Signage: Uniform Wayfinding signs and attractive landscaping, lighting, signage and information kiosks can help foster connections between Downtown and the rest of the city. Wayfinding systems and kiosks can provide information on travel routes, parking locations, and transit operations, as well as sightseeing information for tourists. In addition, signage and streetscape improvements north of Mount Vernon Square near the new convention center would facilitate visitors' access to and from the Shaw community and Howard University.

Key Actions: Establish gateways along New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey Avenues; Study potential reopening of I and 10th Streets on old Convention Center site.



The treatment of intersections to accommodate pedestrians is critical to strengthening connections to areas adjacent to Downtown.



Strategy Two: Develop a Downtown Circulator System

While the Metrorail system qualifies as one of the great commuter services in the world, Washington lacks a comparable surface transit system to serve the 250,000 daily downtown population and the 22 million annual visitors to downtown from within the region. A clean-fuel Downtown Circulator would fill this void.

The Downtown Circulator would improve connections between Downtown employment centers and the restaurants, shopping, and entertainment attractions located along F and 7th Streets. It would help tourists and visitors travel Downtown from adjacent areas and could help make jobs accessible to existing and potential workers with limited transportation options.

In accordance with adopted District policy, supported by the Downtown BID, the Circulator system should follow at least two service loops. A north-south route could follow 7th and 9th Streets linking Mt. Vernon Square to the National Mall. An east-west route could connect the Union Station/Capitol Hill area to the White House/Treasury area along E and F Streets.

The feasibility of implementing a trolley system to circulate throughout the Downtown should be studied. Such a system could provide significant benefits. Because Downtown's large size makes internal circulation a challenge, a trolley would make it convenient for workers to travel longer distances to shop, eat, or enjoy a cultural attraction. The trolleys themselves would provide an added attraction for visitors to enjoy. Finally, in addition to being convenient and fun, a trolley is efficient: such systems are some of the most effective means to move large numbers of people, and a downtown trolley could ease the rush-hour overcrowding that occurs at certain Metro stations.

Strategy Three: Implement the Park Once Concept

To facilitate movement and circulation within Downtown, an effective and efficient transportation system would reduce the number of automobiles, either parked or in motion. If visitors would "...park once and travel about Downtown by transit, bicycle, and walking", there would be substantially less automobile traffic on Downtown streets. The "park once" goal can be accomplished by intercepting vehicles in parking facilities both in Downtown and on the fringes of Downtown, and then by providing internal circulation through a Downtown circulation system.



Implementation of the "Park Once" Concept would require a significant level of investment in two areas. New studies should be undertaken to identify appropriate sites for municipal parking garages, and to map out a strategy to improve internal circulation.

[Develop a Short-term Parking Plan and Study the Feasibility of Constructing Municipal Garages:](#) Municipal parking facilities at the following locations would support the land use and urban design plans for Downtown:

- an underground garage at Judiciary Square would allow unsightly surface parking areas to become attractive green spaces;
- a large garage constructed under new uses at the existing convention center site would help meet the parking demand generated by the new convention center; and
- a well-designed, above-grade garage in the Gallery Place/ Chinatown area would provide off-street parking in an area characterized by smaller historic buildings that cannot provide adequate subsurface parking without demolition.



Municipal garages, such as this one, would support the Park Once concept.